

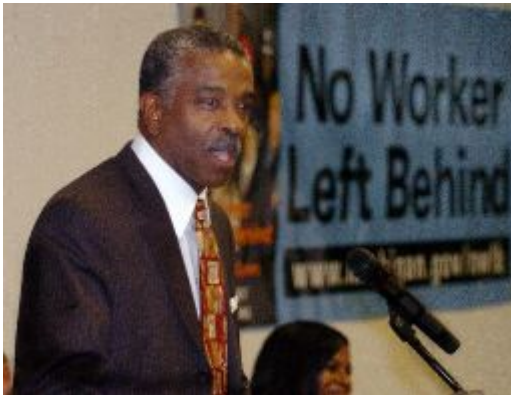
Macomb workers utilize retraining

College plays big role in No Worker Left Behind

By Frank DeFrank
Macomb Daily Staff Writer
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Like many, April Pritchett figured her employment future was secure after 10 years with the same mortgage company.

But like many, her world was shaken when she lost that job two years ago.



Keith Cooley, director of the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth, discussed the state's No Worker Left Behind program Monday at Macomb Community College in Warren.
Macomb Daily staff photo by David N. Posavetz

"I'm no spring chicken," the Clinton Township resident said. "So when I lost my job, not only did I need job training, I needed help with my resume and preparing to look for work."

Pritchett soon found herself enrolled at Macomb Community College - the first time she'd attended school in years - where she worked to upgrade her skills to become more marketable in the 21st century.

"That (attending school) wasn't as scary as not being able to find a job," said the mother of two sons, ages 31 and 18, and grandmother of a 9-year-old. "I tried to take it as an opportunity."

Today, Pritchett is back to work, still in the mortgage business, but with a new set of skills that made her attractive to her new employer, Shore Mortgage.

"I'm learning something entirely new," she said.

Pritchett's story and similar successes were the focus of a celebration Monday at Macomb Community College in Warren marking the first anniversary of a program called No Worker Left Behind.

Triggered by the loss of high-paying manufacturing jobs, particularly in southeast Michigan, state officials, led by Gov. Jennifer Granholm, created the No Worker Left Behind initiative.

Funded by federal and state sources, the program seeks to train displaced workers, provide them with new skills and send them back into the workforce with the kind of training employers now seek.

Locally, the program is administered through the Macomb/St. Clair Michigan Works! with much of the training done at Macomb Community College.

In the past year, those two entities combined to train 2,271 No Worker Left Behind-funded workers, 423 of whom enrolled at the college.

"Macomb County is a leader in our effort to train 100,000 Michigan workers for good jobs," Granholm said in a prepared statement.

"With the hard work of our Michigan Works! agencies and their innovative partners like Macomb Community College and local employers, No Worker Left Behind will put thousands of workers in to new high-wage jobs in the years ahead."

Although many of the high-paying manufacturing jobs of the past no longer exist in southeastern Michigan, No Worker Left Behind seeks to re-train workers for industries that will take their place - in particular, so called "green jobs."

As the state's economy gradually shifts, No Worker Left Behind wants to ensure companies can access a readily available, properly trained work force, said Keith Cooley, director of the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth.

"Turning Michigan into the leading state in green jobs can't happen unless we train our workers," Cooley said. "We've had to change what we do and how we do it."

To be eligible for the program, applicants must be unemployed or have received notice of termination or layoff. Employed persons whose family income is less than \$40,000 also are eligible.

Participants must be at least 18 years old and not a full-time college student.

Eligible persons may receive up to two years worth of free tuition, a skills assessment administered by the Michigan Works! Agencies and must pursue a degree or occupational certificate in a high-demand occupation or emerging industry.

For more information about No Worker Left Behind, call (517) 335-1319 or visit the program's Website at www.michigan.gov/nwlb.